

HISTORY

# Duxbury's early settlers – the project begins

By LAMONT "MONTY" HEALY

Earlier this year people at the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society suggested that I might be able to help them show the locations of land grants made to the early Duxbury settlers. The intent is to learn more about our earliest European residents and our town's place names. I'm a retired land surveyor with 50 years of experience and this seemed like the ideal project for my interests and skills.

The "official" property history of the town begins with the Plymouth Colony Second Land Grant of 1627, even though some people had settled here prior to that date. The Plymouth Colony First Land Division granted "1 acre garden lots" in and around Plymouth.

The Second Land Division was the 1627 Grant in which each person – man, woman and child – received 20 acres (a family of five, for example, would receive 100 acres). An attempt was made to provide each owner with five acres in breadth along the bay, and four acres in depth perpendicular to the shore, with increases in depth as required by the size of the family.

The people who laid out these properties, the "Layers Out," were William Bradford, Edward Winslow, John Howland, Francis Cooke, Joshua Pratt and Edward Bangs, the leading citizens of the town, possibly assisted by a surveyor. Each of these men received a peck of corn for every share they laid out. These men were given a great deal of latitude, as some properties had more water "frontage" and some had none, and their decisions were final. They were to skip over the poorer land (which became "Common Land") and the properties were to be laid out prior to a "drawing of the lots."

The Second Division started at the Eel River (Plymouth) and went north to Plymouth Center, skipping over the First Division and then continued north through what is now Kingston and then "around to the other side of the bay" (Duxbury.)

It should be noted that as of 2009, to the best of my knowledge, no plan or list of these settlers has been found. I believe such a list, or maybe even a plan, does exist in an attic, museum, church or other depository. In the meantime I hope to make use of a "full list of colonists in 1627" (published in The Pilgrim Republic, as well as other places) that lists all the families, their ages, the ships they arrived on and the date of their deaths. Possibly, we can match this list with the known settlers and their property and then work on the others that were left out.

Others have made efforts to define these properties (Henry A. Fish, Dorothy Wentworth, Edwin D. Johnson, the Westons, to name a few) and their work is invaluable to us. It should be noted that the "Duxborough" records, covering the period 1630-1665, kept by a clerk were lost or destroyed by fire. At this time this looks like a huge jig-saw puzzle, but by plotting out some of the critical deeds, I believe it can be solved.

To provide some insight into different approaches that we may use, in cases where we cannot find any evidence of the original grant, we may be able to use deeds to adjacent land grants to determine abutting owners or who the land was originally granted to. A parcel can also be defined by plotting out later deeds of portions of the property and then piecing them together.

In the course of completing this project, mistakes will be made, so any conflicting research that anyone can provide would add to a more accurate result. If you know something we don't, please e-mail me at [monty15@msn.com](mailto:monty15@msn.com).

*Next time: The Governor Thomas Prentice property around Soule Avenue, Landing Road, Pilgrim Road areas.*